

# Mental health services in prisons, our new asylums

Presentation to the All Party Select Committee on Mental Health

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Colleen A. Hanrahan, MSW, JD, PhD(C)

# Do you know why...

## Prisons have been called “our new asylums”?

Did you know that ...

**Mental health services  
delivered in prisons are not  
equivalent to those delivered  
in the community?**

# Purpose of this presentation

- ▶ To inform the Committee
- 1. Why prisons are “our new asylums”
- 2. Why prison mental health services are not equivalent
- 3. Why services should be equivalent, and
- 4. How equivalence can be achieved

# Equivalence

**Equivalence = The right to health** (Exworthy et al, 2012)

Available

Accessible

Acceptable

Good quality

# 1. Background

## Prisons as our new asylums



# Changing profile of prison populations

- ▶ Noticeable increase of prisoners with mental illnesses and other mental disorders
- ▶ Attributed, in part, to impact of policy changes, i.e., deinstitutionalization
- ▶ Result: criminalization of persons with mental illnesses

## 2. Why services are not equivalent

- ▶ Constitution and common law
- ▶ Prison administrators, not mental health care system, are responsible



# Delivery of prison mental health services

- ▶ Prison administrators employed, or have Ks with, health care providers
- ▶ New types of regimes introduced in some countries
- ▶ New model in four of ten Canadian provinces (not NL)

# Comparison of systems

## Prison system



Focus on security

Paramilitary

High school with training

## Mental health care system



Focus on patient care

Multi-disciplinary team

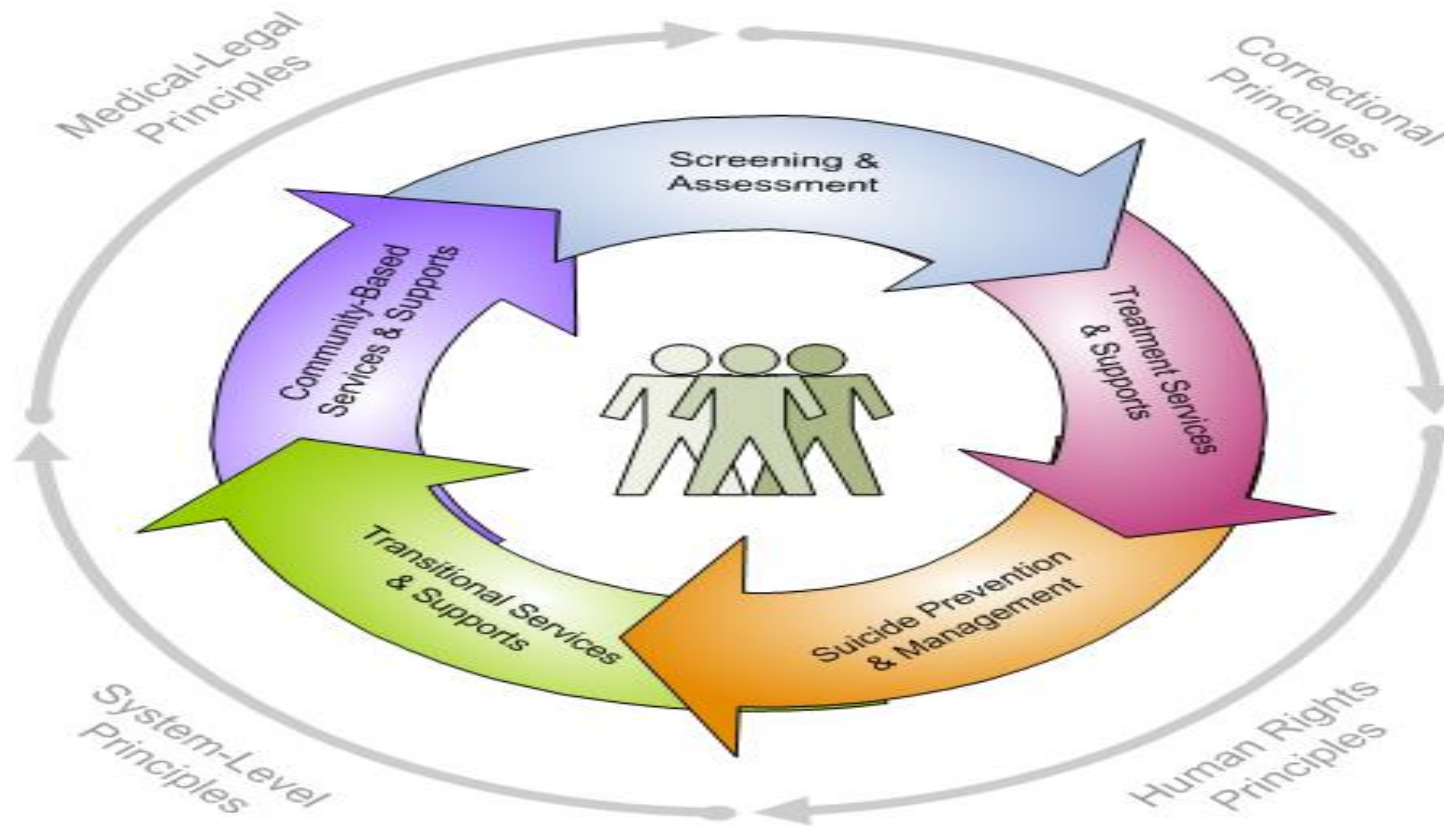
Licensed professionals

# Applying the Right to Health



# 3. Why services should be equivalent

(Livingston, 2009)



## 4. How equivalence can be achieved

- ▶ Prison mental health care services must be part of the universal health care system to satisfy the right to health
- ▶ Prison mental health services need to be integrated with our mental health care system
- ▶ Prison system and the mental health care system must work in collaboration with one another

# Conclusions

- ▶ Prison mental health care system needs reform to meet the right to health, and achieve equivalence
- ▶ The result: continuity of care, and improved mental health care, for prisoners

# Questions / comments

*Thank-you for the opportunity to deliver this presentation!*